

From: "Skvarla, John"
Date: August 9, 2013, 5:30:59 PM EDT
To: "Skvarla, John"
Subject: Exempt Designation

Dear DENR Leaders,

First of all, I apologize for sending this email late on a Friday. The reason I'm sending it now is because you may see stories in the news media regarding this issue over the weekend, and I didn't want to wait until next week to communicate with you.

I hope that by now you will have noticed that my management style is to surround myself with the best possible people and to reward initiative, leadership, dedication, and creativity. I have found plenty of folks with those qualities here at DENR.

As you probably know, the legislature has approved a number of new exempt positions within DENR. Your position is one that will be designated exempt. Next week you will receive a bureaucratic memorandum informing you of the change, but before you received that I wanted to elucidate the way I see this development and how I intend to use it.

Many say that the original SPA limit on exempt designations was instituted by a previous legislature to protect a political bureaucracy. Some have denounced the current legislature's actions as an attempt to build a political bureaucracy. But I'm neither a politician nor a bureaucrat, and that's not how I will manage while I am secretary of this department.

I see this designation of your position as exempt as a badge of distinction of which you should be proud. I know not all of you will agree with that sentiment, but I see an exempt managerial or policy-making designation as a mark of leadership. It was always silly to pretend that only 30 or so people in a department of nearly 4,000 were making managerial decisions. DENR has more than 600 managers, and the majority of those carry the responsibility necessary to operate our agency.

What is most important is how the change in designation will be used. **As I have said all along, I do not intend wholesale changes in DENR's management.** I said this long before I knew that the number of exempt positions would increase, and I reiterate it now. There will be changes, of course. But as you have seen since January, we will make changes based on competency, efficiency, performance and changing requirements, not based on politics.

I am sure you have heard me describe DENR as a community of science. At all levels, our leadership is composed of scientists and professionals who are passionate about what we do. It would be not only irresponsible, but truly impossible to replace the knowledge, experience, and dedication of our key managers on any wholesale basis.

Our leaders in DENR are the most important ambassadors for our mission to protect the environment and revitalize the economy of our beloved state. I am honored to have you join me in that journey and confident that you will be even more proud to serve DENR going forward as you have been thus far.

Sincerely,

John

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